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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Pakistan

Addendum

Information provided by Pakistan in follow-up to the concluding observations*

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Note: The present document is being circulated in English, French and Spanish only.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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1. Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996. Pakistan presented its fourth periodic report before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred as Committee) on 12 February 2013. Subsequently, the Committee adopted its concluding observations and recommendations, which were shared with the relevant federal and provincial departments as well as civil society organizations. These were also uploaded on the official website of the Federal Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights. Broad-based consultations were held for seeking input for the follow-up report on recommendations No. 22 and 28 with government departments, the National Commission on the Status of Women as well as civil society organizations.

Recommendation No. 22 (a) and (b)

2. In order to curb harmful customary practices and eliminate violence and discrimination against women, a number of laws have been passed in the last few years, including among others, The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act 2011, Acid Crime Prevention Bill 2011, Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010 and the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Bill, 2010. The Government is taking policy as well as administrative measures to implement pro-women legislation.

3. The Vision 2025 of Government of Pakistan is considered to be foundation for change and transformation which aims at creating new opportunities. It focuses on ending discriminations faced by women and provides an enabling environment to every woman to develop her full potential and share the benefits of economic growth, prosperity and social development. Strategies and policy frameworks have been outlined to enable women to be partners in their own development through participation in the family, community and national life.

4. An inter-provincial ministerial group for women development has been constituted which meets periodically to agree on key priorities for gender equality in line with our international commitments. This Group is comprised of ministers for women development and respective secretaries of provincial women development departments, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women and representative of Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights. In addition, provincial Convention implementation committees have also been revitalized/reconstituted to ensure implementation of the articles of the Convention and concluding observations.

5. Human Rights Cell of Supreme Court is also ensuring implementation of pro-women legislation. In this regard, the Supreme Court has also taken suo motu action in cases where women's rights guaranteed by the Constitution and subsequent legislation have been violated. In addition, women crisis centres across the country are also providing legal aid for redressal and relief to women against violence through their lawyers to provide support to victims.

6. In order to provide speedy access to justice to women victims, nine women police centres have been established. Women complaint centres have also been established in the existing police stations with the view to provide prompt help to women. These centres are also providing legal advice and counselling to women. Each centre is staffed with women police officers.

7. The National Police Bureau has established a steering committee on human rights and gender issues. Its members include the gender focal persons from police departments across the country and senior members of the Bureau. The Bureau is engaged in formulating strategies and programmes to eliminate violence against women. It has also established a complaints cell, which processes complaints against the police received from women. Departmental proceedings are initiated against police officers found guilty.

8. For the implementation of Protection against Harassment at the Workplace Act 2010, government departments have established departmental committees to address harassment cases. As prescribed in the Act, an ombudsperson has been appointed at the federal level to hear complaints of sexual harassment as an appellant authority.

9. At the provincial level, Public Prosecution Department, Punjab has posted public prosecutors in the magisterial courts and courts of sessions all over the Punjab to carry out prosecution in criminal cases related to women. The Government of Sindh has established five women complaint cells at Karachi, Hyderabad, Benazirabad, Larkana and Sukkur. The Government of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa have taken steps to implement aforementioned legislation.

10. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004 amended the Pakistan Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code to define "honour killing", and "Karo Kari" as murder and to establish punishments.

11. "Honour killing" is now included in the definition of "fasad-fil-arz" (social disorder) with a minimum penalty of 10 years and a maximum of 14, laid down as tazir ["law of the land"]. Section 311 of the Pakistan Penal Code empowers the Court to punish an accused even after the waiver or compounding by the heirs or/walis of the deceased by way of tazir with death, or imprisonment for life, or imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 14 years as tazir. Besides, the Court has the discretion to award a penalty in cases where the right of Qisas (retribution) has been waived or compounded by the families involved.

12. The superior courts have handed down judgments in cases of violence against women and the perpetrators have been punished for the offences they have committed in the name of "honour killing".

13. In order to further strengthen Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004 the Federal Government through the National Commission on the Status of Women undertook review of the Qisas and Diyat Law to remove provisions that may lead to its possible misuse/manipulation, particularly in the context of killing of women in the name of so-called honour.

14. A series of consultations were held in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad and it has been proposed that if "fasad fil arz" is imposed, the imprisonment may extend to 25 years but not less than 14 years as "tazir". In case of intentional murder, the sentence shall be imprisonment which may extend up to 25 years but not less than 10 years. If the murder is committed in the name of honour, the imprisonment sentence shall not be less than 14 years and the offender shall also be liable to payment of half of the Diyat. These recommendations have been forwarded to the Parliament.

Recommendation no. 22 (c)

15. Twenty-six Shaheed Benazir Bhutto crisis centres were established by the Ministry of Women Development. After 18th Constitutional Amendment, these centres have been transferred to the provinces. These centres mainly focus on prevention and protection of women from abuse, violence, exploitation and harassment. These centres also provide shelter, legal and medical aid and counselling facilities to women victims of abuse and violence. Provincial departments of Women Development and Social Welfare are committed to increase the number of women crisis centres.

16. The provincial and district level monitoring and evaluation committees that monitor services and ensure implementation of uniform SOPs/guidelines notified by the respective women development/ social welfare department have been constituted to plan, review and evaluate implementation of SOPs in about all the crisis centres and Dar-ul-Amans. SOPs have been written in easy language and contain guidelines for managers and staff of the shelters, drop-in centres and short-term stay centres. Different model documents including templates pertaining to admissions and discharge, counselling session forms as well as templates for procedural documents and information gathering have also been developed.

17. A project, titled "Establishment of helpline for legal advice on human rights violations" has been initiated by the Federal Government through Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights. In addition to many help lines, Madadgaar (1098), a helpline for women and children run by a CSO is in operation.

18. At the provincial level, women survivors of violence (all ages) are provided with welfare and rehabilitation services by social welfare departments in 35 women's shelters (Dar ul Amans) in 35 Districts of Punjab and 12 women's crisis centres. Services include shelter, legal, psychological and medical support. Punjab Women's Helpline (0800-933-72) was established in August 2014 to provide information, referrals and for complaints of inaction by the authorities related to discrimination and violence against women.

19. In Sindh province, 8 public and private shelter homes are working under the control of Social Welfare Department under specific SOPs. There are also several help lines working in province of Sindh wherein toll-free numbers have been installed. In Balochistan, three Shaheed Benazir Shelter centres are functioning in districts Khuzdar, Sibi and Quetta. Establishment of three helplines services at Quetta, Sibi and Khuzdar is also under process with the support of CSOs.

20. In Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Police to Victim Services — Toll Free Number 0800-00400 has been established at the Central Police Office Peshawar to facilitate victims who either are not in a position to visit a Police Station or have been denied their right. Women Counters in 70 police stations have also been established with the view to enable the women to avail police assistance.

Recommendation No. 22 (d)

21. The Government has made concerted efforts to eliminate harmful practices and stereotypes regarding women by formulating laws and taking policy and administrative measures (some details shared above). At the federal level, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights has framed a national plan of action with representation of all stakeholders, including provincial governments, to

improve the human rights situation in Pakistan. The plan comprises six thematic areas i.e., policy and legal framework, implementing key human rights priorities, cross cutting interventions for promotion and protection of human rights, implementation of international human rights instruments, institutional interventions and implementation and monitoring mechanisms with special focus on vulnerable groups including women, children, persons with disabilities and minorities.

22. A model women empowerment package has also been drafted by Federal Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights to guide provincial governments in developing their own packages for empowerment of women. The package provides a multifaceted approach to address the issues faced by women.

23. On 8th March, 2012, the Government of Punjab announced a comprehensive package of measures — "Punjab Women Empowerment Package 2012" which corroborated the Government's firm commitment to addressing the social and economic rights of women. Punjab Government presents new initiatives every year. For instance, initiatives of 2014 include training of women domestic workers, veterinary training of women in livestock and poultry at Tehsil Hospitals of Livestock and Dairy Development Department, free of cost vocational training to women belonging to minority communities in Punjab, Establishment of cottage villages for women in labour colonies as a sale point of handmade clothes, jewellery and handicrafts, affordable residential facilities voucher scheme for working women, day care workers' training and help desk for women in every police station of Punjab.

24. Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act 2014 has been enacted for empowerment of women. Besides, the Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act 2014 aims to amend certain laws of the Punjab province for the purpose of representation of women in the decision-making processes and their empowerment.

25. Sindh and Balochistan Governments have endorsed the proposals by Federal Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights for Women Empowerment Package. The Government of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa has also announced Women Empowerment Policy Framework aiming to ensure social, economic, legal and political empowerment of women in the province.

26. Government of Sindh and Government of Balochistan have enacted Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013. Elimination of Custom of Ghag Act 2013 enacted by the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa criminalized the harmful practice of Ghag under which a man now cannot claim that he is engaged to a woman without her consent and consent of her parents and she is bound to marry him. Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Deserving Widows and Special Persons Foundation Act, 2014 is specifically designed for the uplift and empowerment of widows and special persons in all spheres of life.

27. At the Federal level, following bills are under consideration:

(a) Hindu Marriage Bill, 2015 has been introduced in the National Assembly for its enactment;

(b) Finalization of the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2013 and Divorce (Amendment) Bill;

(c) Review of draft Act to Combat the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, 2013 from the women's perspective;

(d) Review of Draft Act to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2013 from women's perspective;

(e) Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2014 for ICT;

(f) Draft Reproductive Health Care Bill 2014.

28. In order to create awareness, Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights and provincial Women Development Departments celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March to highlight the socioeconomic, legal and political development of women. President, Prime Minister and Chief Ministers reaffirm the Commitment of the Government for development and empowerment of women through participation in various events. The celebration is shown live on the State television channel. Celebration of International Human Rights Day (10 December), Universal Children Day (20 November), Girl Child Day (11 October) and International Day for Persons with Disabilities (3 December) further help in creating awareness.

29. Issues regarding women rights, women empowerment, gender equality and violence against women are addressed and highlighted by the Women Development Departments of provinces. For the dissemination of information to the private and public sectors, sensitization seminars, workshops, symposiums and consultative meetings are regularly held with engagement of the police, law enforcement officials, judiciary and academia.

30. Federal Government through the National Commission on the Status of Women in collaboration with UK Research Centre launched the Pakistan Women's Media Complaint Cell in February 2014 to promote and ensure gender responsiveness within media houses and among journalists. The complaint cell was a platform for the public to raise their concerns and complaints against any gender-insensitive content in print and electronic media.

31. A nationwide campaign was launched by Federal Government through the National Commission on the Status of Women with White Ribbon during 16 Days of Activism for Elimination of Violence against women and to create awareness about women protection laws through seminars, television, radio, social media, banners, and print media. SMS campaign was run across the country and 1 million messages were sent. A well-attended public seminar was followed by a 2-week campaign on the laws. The campaign will be continued at regular intervals during the year.

32. For promoting laws and strategies a number of seminars and workshops have also been held throughout the country. For example, in 2013, a reflective roundtable, Women Combating Extremism was organized in Lahore with speakers from all segments of society. Workshops for Officers/ Officials under the Capacity Building Programme of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights to create mass awareness of human rights, with specific focus on women rights were arranged in Islamabad (6 May, 2014), Peshawar (17 October, 2014), Lahore (12 November, 2014), Karachi (23 December, 2014) and Quetta (6 January, 2015).

33. PTV (State channel) has telecast number of talk shows, dramas, discussion, poetry and interviews in national and all regional languages to highlight rights of women. More than 100 private television channels are also creating awareness regarding women's rights.

Recommendation No. 22 (e) and (f)

34. As conveyed to the Committee, being a responsible State, Pakistan has a robust arms control regime in place.

35. Despite the fact that collection and collation of disaggregated data is not easy for a developing country like Pakistan, being mindful of the significance and implications of such data, we have undertaken a number of measures to ensure that disaggregated data is compiled and is made available to all. These measures include the sensitization and capacity building of the Federal Bureau of Statistics and the Population Census and aligning it with the SAARC gender database.

36. The Gender Crime Cell of National Police Bureau gathers, collates and analyses data on violence against women, especially cases of gang rape, rape, abduction, kidnapping and honour killings. It also deals with cases of sexual harassment in the workplace.

37. The National Commission on the Status of Women is also supporting the Gender Crime Cell to develop a system of sex disaggregated crime data (including all kinds of violence against women) from all provinces and areas for analysis, tracking and policy planning. Statistics Division/ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics is a focal agency for preparation of SAARC Gender Info Base, which is a non-conventional database of sex-disaggregated data as well as qualitative/ quantitative information. It provides extensive range of information on the following three thematic areas: i) Feminization of poverty, ii) Violence against women (Especially trafficking), and Women's health issues. In addition, office of the Federal and Provincial Ombudspersons collect and share data on cases of sexual harassment brought to them.

Recommendation No. 28 (a) and (b)

38. Pakistan is convinced that the empowerment of women can be realized with betterment in the educational, social, economic and political fields. Therefore, the Government has taken a number of steps to overcome obstacles to women and girls' education.

39. In the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Article 25A "Right to Education" has been incorporated in the Constitution which would further the cause of women and girl's right to education. Vision 2025 aims at significant increase in access to education as well as making improvements in the quality of education.

40. Acknowledging that adult literacy, and particularly functional literacy for women in rural areas, is an issue that requires serious attention, the Government's National Commission on Human Development has established a country-wide Adult Literacy programme. Two million women have acquired functional literacy skills under the programme since it began in 2002.

41. The Government has made significant strides in increasing girls' enrolment and retention rates in primary, middle and high schools in recent years. Physical infrastructure has been improved in many schools, especially in rural areas, which has encouraged parents to send their children to school. New schools have also been built. A significant effort has been made to increase the number of women teachers. Training programmes to improve the classroom environment (i.e. interactive teaching methods, zero tolerance for corporal punishment, group work, the use of stimulating learning materials) have also been strengthened.

42. Ministry of Education, Training and Standards in Higher Education at the federal level has developed a National Plan of Action for the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework 2013-16. According to the Plan, out of School children for the year 2013-14 are 4998871, of which 2858801 are girls. National Plan of Action suggests remedial measures and it is expected that it will help bring down to half, the number of out of school girls by 2015-16. Earlier, Numerous time-bound programmes had been developed to ensure the enrolment and retention of girls, including the large-scale "Education Sector Reforms" and "Education for All" programmes, both of which have gender-specific targets.

43. As part of the graduation strategy aiming to link the Unconditional Cash Transfer to attainment of human development goals, BISP initiated the Waseela-e-Taleem (WET-Source of Education) Programme. Waseela-e-Taleem Programme was launched in five pilot districts as part of initial test phase, in collaboration with education departments of provinces/regions in November 2012. In two years' time, Waseela-e-Taleem has enrolled around 52,000 children out of a potential 75,000 children from among the BISP Beneficiary families in the target areas.

44. In the extended phase, all new districts have been selected in consultation with provincial education departments on the basis of supply capacity assessment. Around 3.3 million children between 5-12 years of age are present in the 1.47 million beneficiary families in 27 extended phase districts, out of which around 2.65 million children are out of school and only 0.66 million are currently attending the schools. BISP is targeting to reach these out of school children within 2 years by introducing a stipend amount to encourage the beneficiary families for sending their children to schools. BISP stipend amount would not only increase the enrolment number in primary schools but would also reduce the drop out ratio of children currently attending schools.

45. The Federal Government, on the initiative of the Prime Minister of Pakistan has also launched a scheme to support the students from less developed areas. The scheme is focused on enhancing opportunities for access to higher education especially to talented but financially constrained students belonging to remote and far flung areas of the country who despite possessing academic merit, are unable to finance their education. Under the programme, Rs.1200 million will be paid as fee for 35,000 students.

46. Several Provincial programmes provide stipends, free textbooks and nutritional support to girls' schools. These have resulted in increased girls' enrolment. Children (girls and boys) are provided 100 per cent free text books in public schools from grades 1 to 10 across Punjab to 12.5 million students. Computer labs in 5,700 schools have been established. Fourteen "Danish schools" (boarding schools) in 7 districts have also been established. Fifty-seven new girl's colleges are also being established for education in the province.

47. Punjab Education Endowment Fund awarded 18,937 scholarships in 2013-14 and 18,650 till August of FY 2014-15. Of these, 50 per cent scholarships were given to girls across 36 districts of Punjab.

48. To increase and retain enrolment of girls in Balochistan and Punjab, the World Food Programme in collaboration with the Government provides wheat and oil, primarily for girls, throughout the province. This constitutes a significant incentive to send girls to school and to ensure they stay enrolled beyond Class 5.

49. The Sindh Department of Education and Literacy Reform Support Unit provide stipends to girl student in Classes 6-10. The stipend is Rs 24,000 per annum, a significant addition to the incomes of poor families. In Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, 70 per cent of girls' schools in "backward" districts are providing stipends under child support programmes.

50. Ghar Aya Ustad is a campaign where teachers from government schools in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa visit nearby households, convince parents to send their children to school for a day of activities, and allow parents to observe their children in that environment to improve enrolment and dispel any misconceptions. Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa has also changed the medium of instruction in public schools from Urdu to English from April 2014. This will bring public schools at par with private schools in the province and provide uniform education to all children.

51. A large number of students also appear in secondary, higher secondary, bachelors and master level programmes as private students. Allama Iqbal Open University is the First Distance Education University in South Asia that caters to the educational needs of 1.3 million students and enables them to study at their own place, at their own pace and at their own convenience. More than 50 per cent of its students are women.

52. More young women, than ever before, are attending University, as demonstrated by their increasing enrolment rates. The percentage of women in public sector universities is higher than that of men and is increasing each year. In addition to women's access to all the universities of Punjab, women's universities have also been established to promote higher education for women. There are two women universities in Punjab and one each in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Balochistan. There are also four women medical colleges. Punjab Government has established four women universities in 2013.

53. Regarding improving quality of education, Learning Innovation Division of Higher Education Commission is the hub for the In-Service Continuous Professional Development of HEIs Teaching Faculty and Management. With a two-pronged objective it is spearheading initiatives for the in-service professional quality enhancement of academia and their management through two development projects i.e., National Academy of Higher Education and English Language Teaching Reforms.

54. Higher education departments in provinces have started a short-term in-service training programme for their employees in 2014. The departments plan to include a gender issues component in the training modules soon.

55. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment Education is the responsibility of the provinces. However, establishment of the "National Curriculum Commission" is under consideration with the objective to maintain uniform educational standards all over the country and to include human rights education in the curriculum.

56. Government of Punjab has added specific topics, stories and information in curriculum of all grades from 1 to 12 regarding women rights. Sindh School Education Standards and Curriculum Act, 2014 aims to maintain school education standards, supervision of curriculum, textbooks, and assessment process for improving quality of education from early years to grade 12.

Recommendation No. 28 (c) and (d)

57. Pakistan has been affected by the war against terrorism. We continue to pay human and material cost of this war. Terrorists have attacked citizens of Pakistan including minorities, women and children. They have attacked schools mosques, shrines, places of worship of all including minority communities, market places and public gatherings. The terrorists desire to disrupt and divide our society which subscribes to the tolerant and inclusive message of Islam. The people and Government of Pakistan are determined to fight terrorism in a comprehensive manner.

58. Law enforcement agencies have successfully launched the operation "Zarb-e-Azb" against terrorists who had been responsible for the indiscriminate killing of more than 62,000 innocent people which included women, children, security personnel and members of minority groups.

59. In a tragic incident on 16 December 2014, seven gunmen entered in Army Public School in Peshawar and opened fire on the school staff and children, killing 151 students, teachers and administrative staff. This incident shocked the entire nation but further strengthened our resolve to fight terrorism.

60. In December 2014 a National Action Plan on counter-terrorism was devised which included steps, among others countering hate speech and extremist material; prohibiting re-emergence of proscribed organization; taking effective steps against religious persecution; registration and regulation of madrassas; ban on glorification of terrorism and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media; and dealing firmly with sectarian terrorists. The National Counter Terrorism Authority has been further empowered to end terrorism, block all financial and media support for terrorism. Under the plan, an anti-terrorism force is being raised to combat scourge of terrorism.

61. A 15-point plan for a Pakistan Safe Schools Initiative endorsed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the United Nations Special Envoy for Education, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Gordon Brown, through a multimillion-dollar campaign for girls' and boys' education has been launched. An agreement between Mr. Brown and the Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, was signed to work together on a joint effort for the security and safety of school children. The Safe School Initiative is an attempt to improve security of 1,000 schools in Pakistan. The safety measures package comprises armed guards, emergency communication systems, metal detectors and security fences.

62. A large number of private schools and government institutions have been given guidelines by the Government for enhancing school security. Barbed wires have been placed on school walls to make it difficult for unauthorized persons to enter school premises. Rangers and police regularly patrol the premises of schools within specific radius.

63. At the provincial level, on the directives of the Punjab Government, rescue officials along with representatives of the Civil Defence Force, bomb disposal squad and security agencies are practicing emergency drills at public schools and holding security training sessions with students and teaching staff.

64. The Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Government has established the country's first explosive-handling school to train bomb disposal squads wherein bomb disposal squad personnel will be imparted an international level training at the facility. In the first phase, a 500-man unit will acquire expertise in finding hidden explosive material. In the province, boundary walls of almost all schools have been raised up to 8 feet (2.4 m) and topping them with 2 feet (0.61 m) high razor wire.

65. Apart from security measures, repair and rebuilding of schools which have been attacked or which have been temporarily closed due to law enforcement operations against terrorists is being done on a regular basis with the view to reopen the schools. For example, the Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Education Department has made 100 closed schools fully functional in the last few months.

66. After attack of 16 December 2014 on the Public School Peshawar the school was rebuilt in a short span and re-opened on 9 January 2015. This demonstrates that that the resilient people and determined Government of Pakistan would not allow terrorists to deprive children from acquiring education-one of the best tools to fight terrorism and extremism.